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OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

WOMEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of women and girls in the territories occupied by Afghan armed groups, submitted in accordance with Sub-Commission resolution 2001/15*

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* This document was submitted late in order to ensure that the most up to date information could be provided to the Sub-Commission.

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Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with resolution 2001/15, in which the Sub-Commission requested the Secretary-General to continue to make available all the information that could be compiled on the situation of women and girls in the territories controlled by Afghan armed groups.

2. The present report supplements the report entitled "Discrimination against women and girls in Afghanistan" (E/CN.6/2002/5) submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-sixth session in March 2002, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/3. The earlier report provides an overview of the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, with particular focus on events since September 2001. It contains factual information about activities undertaken by the United Nations system and the assistance community in support of Afghan women. It also includes action-orientated recommendations for further efforts. To avoid duplication, the present report will only include relevant new developments since March 2002 and should be read together with the earlier substantive report, which will be made available to the Sub-Commission as a reference document.

3. In recent months the following resolutions have been adopted on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan.

4. At its forty-sixth session, in March 2002, the Commission on the Status of Women, acting without a vote, recommended that the Economic and Social Council adopt a resolution on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. Welcoming developments in Afghanistan that would contribute to the creation of conditions that would allow all Afghans, especially women and girls, to enjoy their inalienable human rights and fundamental freedoms and fully participate in the reconstruction and development in their country, and emphasizing that a safe environment, free from violence, discrimination and abuse for all Afghans was essential for a viable and sustainable recovery and reconstruction, it urged the Afghan Interim Authority and the future Afghan Transitional Authority to, inter alia, respect fully the equal human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls in accordance with international human rights law. It also called upon the international community to continue to provide financial and technical assistance, including human rights education, to protect the human rights of women and girls and to support initiatives to end violence against them and to increase their economic security, as well as to strengthen the capacity of Afghan women to fully and effectively participate in conflict resolution and peace-building efforts and in civil, political, economic, cultural and social life.

5. At its fifty-eighth session, in April 2002, the Commission on Human Rights adopted, without a vote, resolution 2002/19 on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, in which it noted with deep concern recent abuses and violations of the human rights of women and girls, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, abductions and kidnappings, as well as forced marriage and trafficking. It called on the Interim Authority and its successors to give high priority to the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

against Women and to respect fully the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls in accordance with international human rights law, and to bring to an end, without delay, all violations of the human rights of women and girls. In this context it also called for urgent measures to ensure:

(a) The repeal of any legislative and other measures in place that discriminate against women and girls and those that impede the realization of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(b) The full, equal and effective participation of women in civil, cultural, economic, political and social life throughout the country at all levels;

(c) Respect for the equal right of women to work and their reintegration into employment in all segments and at all levels of Afghan society;

(d) The equal right of women and girls to education without discrimination, the reopening of schools throughout the country and the admission of women and girls to all levels of education;

(e) Respect for the equal right of women and girls to personal physical security, and that those responsible for physical attacks on women are brought to justice;

(f) Respect for the freedom of movement of women and girls;

(g) Respect for the effective and equal access of women and girls to the facilities necessary to protect their rights to achieve the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

The Commission decided to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan for a further year.

6. At its 4560th meeting, on 26 June 2002, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1419 (2002), in which it welcomed the successful and peaceful holding, from 11 June to 19 June, of the Emergency Loya Jirga and noted with particular satisfaction the large participation of women, as well as the representation of all ethnic and religious communities. It urged the Transitional Authority to build further on efforts of the Interim Administration to promote the welfare and interests of Afghan women and children and to provide education to boys and girls

I. WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

7. As noted in my earlier report, submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-sixth session, women's effective participation in civil, cultural, economic, political and social life should be promoted and protected throughout the country. Women are the predominant social category in Afghanistan, estimated to comprise 55 per cent or more of the population. Solutions to many of the problems Afghan women and girls face will come by addressing gender issues in every aspect of social, political and economic life.

8. In this context, it is welcomed that when the Interim Administration assumed authority on 22 December 2001, it invited female civil servants to return to the positions they had held prior to the Taliban taking control. Female employees of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations also returned to work. However, despite the positive developments which inspire hope for the future involvement of women in public life, serious problems persist and women's voices continue to be stifled.

9. Women of all ethnicities have been compelled to restrict their participation in public life to avoid being targets of violence by armed factions. Afghan women, especially outside Kabul, continue to face serious threats to their physical safety, denying them the opportunity to participate fully and effectively in the rebuilding of their country.

10. Though women participated in the Loya Jirga process, it is reported that in some rural areas, local authorities and commanders tried to intimidate potential female candidates. Strong efforts by the Loya Jirga commission and my Special Representative seem to have countered the effects of some of these instances of intimidation. It is evident that only increased conditions of security country-wide can establish an enabling environment for Afghan women and thereby ensure the full inclusion of women's rights in all aspects of governance, including post-conflict reconstruction.

11. A case in point is the intimidation and threats faced by the former Minister for Women's Affairs, Dr. Sima Samar. On 22 June 2002, Dr. Samar received a summons to appear in a Kabul court to face a blasphemy charge. A letter to the editor in a weekly newspaper, Payman-e Muhajid ("Message of the holy warrior") published by the Jamiat-e Islami party, had previously alleged that Dr. Samar had told a Canadian newspaper that she did not believe in Sharia (Islamic law), a charge that Dr. Samar denied. The writer had demanded that she should be given "appropriate punishment" and that the judicial authorities should carry out an investigation. The formal charge of blasphemy against Dr. Samar was dismissed by a Kabul court on 24 June 2002.

12. The blasphemy charge is connected to threats and intimidation directed at legitimate representatives, including women, during the Loya Jirga. Dr. Samar and several other female delegates are said to have been targeted for intimidation on numerous occasions. According to information received, the intimidation and threats helped to marginalize Dr. Samar during and after the Loya Jirga. The seriousness of these cases has led the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and my Special Representative to undertake dedicated investigations and to the adoption of special security measures for the post-Loya Jirga period.

13. The new cabinet of the Transitional Authority of Afghanistan contains both a Minister of Women's Affairs and a Minister of State for Women's Affairs (without portfolio). Dr. Sima Samar is no longer in the cabinet; she has been appointed by the Human Rights Commission as member and chair of the Commission.

14. Women leaders in Afghanistan face challenges that include the precarious security situation; a lack of education, training, tools and acceptance as leaders; and in some cases seclusion. Afghan women are committed to rebuilding their country despite an overwhelming concern for security. Particularly outside of Kabul, security is compromised by feuding

warlords, armed bandits, a proliferation of weapons and militarized males and religious extremism. In this context, Afghan women leaders face the threat of a violent backlash, and it is reported that in rural areas conservative women's groups are increasingly organizing themselves against what is perceived to be an overly liberal women's movement in Kabul. Most are proceeding cautiously to consolidate gains and avoid devastating reversals, while a minority rejects an incremental approach in favour of confronting fundamentalism and patriarchy head-on. Afghan women leaders must be supported and given the necessary resources to enable them to be full partners in the rebuilding of their society.

II. PROTECTION AND SECURITY CONCERNS

15. Security is the key issue in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is in the midst of a turbulent transition process and for the most part remains a country in conflict. In the absence of a strong national security force and with the geographical limitation of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to Kabul only, women and girls have continued to suffer particular effects of the significant insecurity that has characterized much of the country in recent months. Afghanistan remains largely decentralized, with power still firmly localized in the hands of local "warlords" and commanders. There is some demobilization, but even this sometimes creates a heightened security threat for women and girls. As men and boys return to villages with guns and no job prospects there are reports of increases in domestic violence and child abuse. Some women in towns, as well as in rural areas, say they continue wearing the burqa as a means of protection. In fact, in the post-Taliban political climate, the burqa has become one barometer of the level of insecurity women feel. Furthermore, women suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome and depression as a result of life under the Taliban, decades of war, accumulated personal loss and continuing insecurity.

Sexual violence

16. Rape, including a significant incidence of gang rape and rape of women and girls from minority communities in the north, women and girls from nomadic groups, female aid workers and female members of aid workers' families, has been a common and recurrent manifestation of the current insecurity. Since the Taliban were overthrown, unresolved long-standing inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts are generating important new population movements, particularly of Pashtuns from the north. Pashtuns have been subject to numerous abuses, including sexual violence, killings, extortion and looting.

Protective custody

17. Women continue to be incarcerated, often in prisons not meeting the requirements of basic international standards, for acts deemed to be social offences, such as refusal to consent to arranged marriages, running away from abusive spouses or families, and alleged infidelity. Such incidents of incarceration are attributed variously to efforts to protect women from violent retribution from their families or communities, a perceived need to enforce social customs and community practices, and an absence of social or institutional alternatives to incarceration.

Education

18. The overthrow of the Taliban opens up new opportunities for increasing gender equity and promoting the positive development of girls. Schools re-opened in Afghanistan on 23 March 2002, six years after girls had last been allowed to attend school and women had last been allowed to teach. For the first time in five years, women in Afghanistan took university examinations. In Kabul, 500 of the 3,000 people who took university entrance examinations were women. The educational system, t'ough it is beginning to be restored, is still not fully accessible to all who need it.[1] According to reports,[2] there are continuing restrictions on education and pervasive insecurity for female students. It was reported that female students felt unsafe walking along the streets, out of fear of the presence of gunmen and soldiers, who were reportedly all Taliban. Books printed by the interim government were allegedly not being provided to teachers to distribute among students, so they were compelled to teach the curriculum published by the Taliban. Teachers also reported that the head of a provincial education department appointed by the Kabul authorities had been rejected and threatened with death if he tried to occupy his position.[3]

19. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is concerned at the lack of information about the number of young girls currently going to school. There is fear for the so-called "lost generation" of young girls who have still not had the chance to return to school owing to (a) gender discrimination, (b) economic constraints and (c) disability.

20. Discrimination against girls has deep cultural and historic roots and continues to be strong, particularly in rural villages. Often girls do not walk beyond the village and lack the access to health and educational services that boys enjoy. Among disabled children, who, in addition to the loss of limbs and disfigurement face stigmatization and limited access to school and social services, girls are more at a disadvantage than boys. Throughout Afghanistan girl children are considered "guardians of the family honour". Therefore, daughters are frequently closely protected and their public activities restricted. From the age of 10 onward, girls are often withdrawn from co-educational activities and restricted to domestic duties. During the period before marriage, many girls are kept in purdah, confined to their houses as a means of ensuring their purity.

Medical care

21. Gender differences have been also highlighted in a Médecins du Monde gender analysis of medical care in the Maslak camp for displaced persons. Among children, the significantly lower percentage of girls being treated than boys was attributed by local staff to discrimination rather than differences in health needs.

Early marriage

22. Drought, war and worsened economic conditions have led many families to take financial advantage of the tradition of bride price by marrying their daughters off at progressively earlier ages. There is a consistent and direct correlation between a family's economic status and the age at which girl children are married. In very poor families, the process can sometimes be more

akin to a "sale" than a marriage. Among families who are more financially stable the average marriage age is 20 years. In poorer families girls are more often married or promised for marriage at 10 to 14 years. Afghanistan is considered to be one of the countries with the highest percentage of married adolescents. Estimates suggest that between one third and more than half of the country's girls (54 per cent), and almost one in 10 boys (9 per cent) are married between the ages of 15 and 19. This practice, which reportedly also involves girls who are pre-pubescent, denies girls important developmental opportunities, such as education. It also places them at increased risk of complications in pregnancy, sometimes leading to early death where the girl is too young to bear children safely, and has also been found to increase the risk of domestic violence.

Trafficking

23. There are widespread suspicions and allegations of trafficking of Afghan girls. It is believed that girls are purchased inside Afghanistan and taken to Pakistan, from where they are sent to Iran, the Gulf States and other places to be prostitutes or wives. In Pakistan, some girls reportedly remain in brothels that exist solely for Afghans. These allegations have been very difficult to verify, creating a profound need for careful monitoring and documentation.

Sexual slavery

24. Incidents of forced recruitment and kidnapping by the Taliban of young girls, some as young as 10 years of age were widely reported during the years of the Taliban regime. The current whereabouts and situation of those taken remain unknown.

III. MECHANISMS FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

25. Since the conclusion of the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, signed at Bonn on 5 December 2001, monitoring of the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan now benefits from a number of institutional developments both within and outside the Security Council mandated United Nations Assistance mission. A senior human rights advisor within the Office of my Special Representative in UNAMA is now coordinating a mission-wide integrated human rights monitoring and protection team, drawing on the capacities and position of field staff stationed around the country. This integrated structure brings together monitors and protection offices from the various parts of the mission, including core mission staff and staff of individual agencies operating under the auspices of UNAMA, among them the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Children's Funds (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and others.

26. At the same time, a senior gender advisor is coordinating a mission-wide gender team, to ensure an integrated mission approach to key issues facing women and girls in Afghanistan.

27. Following a preliminary meeting of gender focal points representing UNHCR, UNIFEM, UNICEF, UNESCO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Habitat, UNFPA, the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and OHCHR, an interagency network for gender equality was created. To provide the framework for (a) an integrated approach to the United Nations gender sensitive approach to policies and programmes in Afghanistan and (b) effective coordination and monitoring of all United Nations programmes addressing gender issues within the United Nations system and structures and as part of United Nations assistance to Afghanistan. The network reviewed past and current programmes and found overlap and, in many cases duplication. Consequently an interagency framework was created for integration and coordination of all United Nations activities and targeting gender equality.

28. The Interagency Gender Network focused on future programming strategies within the UNAMA mandate of assistance to the Government of Afghanistan. The network considered needs and priorities identified by Afghan women through various processes (The Roundtable on Building Women's Leadership in Afghanistan, convened by UNIFEM and the Government of Belgium 10-11 December 2001, Brussels and the 8 March consultation). Each agency within the network indicated its programme strategy according to its overall mandate and, where applicable, as the programme secretariat for a particular development/reconstruction area. This consultative process helped synchronize approaches and strategies and, especially, reduce duplication and overlap.

29. An 11-member independent national human rights commission was established on 6 June 2002, in accordance with provisions of the Bonn Agreement. It is charged with monitoring and investigating the human rights situation in Afghanistan, including with regard to the situation of women and girls in the country. The commission, whose membership includes five women, is also tasked with managing a national programme for the advancement of the human rights of women. This programme was developed by the Afghan National Working Group on the Development of a National Programme for the Advancement of the Human Rights of Women, with the support of the United Nations. The process to develop this programme was launched on 9 March 2002 at the first Afghan national workshop on human rights and included a series of consultations and technical meetings, culminating in a national workshop on the advancement of the human rights of women in May 2002. The resulting two-year, nationwide programme is to be implemented by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, with the support of the United Nations and other partners. The programme comprises (i) the establishment of a women's rights unit within the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, (ii) a participatory national assessment of programme needs for the advancement of women's rights, (iii) training and information activities on women's rights for key government officials, (iv) a review of key laws affecting women's rights, (v) legal education and formal studies on gender and the legal system in Afghanistan and (vi) programme evaluation and follow-up.

30. On 19 June 2002, 40 women delegates to the Loya Jirga gathered in response to an invitation by the UNAMA/Ministry of Women's Affairs team. The session provided women delegates with an opportunity (a) to share their assessment of their participation in the

Loya Jirga, comparing their initial expectations with the achievements and/or constraints; (b) to put forward and discuss their perspectives for the next two years, based on their experience and lessons learnt in the Emergency Loya Jirga; and (c) to visualize their own role as leaders within their constituencies. After a debate on the above issues, consultations ensued on the appropriate tool/methodology to play such role. Consequently, all participants agreed on the need for and the creation of a network of Afghan women delegates, representing all regions of the country. The network will start operating upon the women's return to the provinces, where they will brief their constituents. This will be followed by preparations for a workshop aimed at providing network members with various skills, including communication, mediation, interviewing, networking and capacity building skills. The workshop is expected to take place in September 2002 and will be replicated in the regions, where network members will take the leadership in this and other initiatives.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

31. Discrimination against, and exploitation of, women and girls will not disappear overnight and the rapid imposition of reforms from outside could itself cause new problems for women, provoking a backlash from men and increasing the risk of violence against women, particularly in the home. Far from being reasons for inaction, these are reminders that the work on this key human rights issue needs to be long-term, situationally appropriate and designed to limit the most harmful practices first.

32. Afghan women must be given every opportunity to shape the agenda to address the complex issues and opportunities in the country. As key stakeholders and agents of change, women in Afghanistan are critical to preventing, managing and resolving conflict and to building sustainable peace. Investing in women leaders who are deeply involved in their country and possess unique experience and expertise will be vital to the rebuilding of Afghanistan. Effective action must take account of relationships and their setting in a complex milieu of culture, religion, political turbulence and conflict. These complexities require an approach led by the demands of Afghan women, who are best positioned to articulate their priorities. Effective intervention will thus draw upon existing capacity by scaling up local organizations and tapping into the networks of talented Afghan women in Afghanistan and abroad, including those in refugee camps in the neighbouring countries.

Recommendations

33. I would like to reiterate the recommendations made in my earlier report to the Commission on the Status of Women which emphasize in particular the need for women's full participation in political decision-making and the importance of a rights-based and gender sensitive approach to relief, reconstruction and development and to supplement those key recommendations with the following:

At the national level

34. The Afghan Transitional Authority and all Afghan groups must, in application of the Bonn Agreement:

Respect fully all human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination of any kind, including gender, ethnicity or religion, in accordance with international law;

Adhere strictly to their obligations under human rights instruments and international humanitarian law, inter alia in relation to women and girls.

35. The Ministry of Women's Affairs should be supported to continue its work towards restoring and improving the legal, economic, political and social status of women and girls throughout Afghanistan. Given the history of discrimination that Afghan women have suffered and the continuing insecurity in the country, this Ministry is key to promoting, coordinating and advancing Afghan women's rights.

36. The Government should ensure that each programme secretariat within the ministries has a gender component.

37. Education is the key to female advancement. Having been excluded from schooling by the Taliban, women need increased opportunities for learning, both at the high school and university levels. Widespread implementation of programmes that build up the capacities and protect the rights of girls and young women is required. Non-formal education programmes that increase literacy and build up vocational skills are particularly needed.

38. Explicit gender components, including ones that address issues of sexual exploitation and violence, should be integrated into all programmes of humanitarian assistance, development and social service. It is vital that women and girls act as decision-makers as well as participants in these programmes.

39. The Government should take the lead and ensure that traditional practices and rituals in the community which violate the human rights of women are eliminated. Multi-pronged strategies involving legislative reform, education and the media should be implemented in order to assist in the transformation of attitudes and social practices, including early marriage.

40. Government programmes and international efforts to address trafficking should be developed in cooperation with non-governmental organizations. Further, governmental organizations and international donor institutions should provide financial support to non-governmental organizations working on the issue of trafficking.

41. Government measures to address trafficking must focus on promotion of the human rights of the women concerned and must not further marginalize, criminalize, stigmatize or isolate them, making them more vulnerable to violence and abuse.

42. Protective custody as a means of dealing with victims of gender-based violence should be abolished. Women who are victims have not committed any crime. Any protection provided

should be voluntary. Shelters should be opened and offer security, legal and psychological counselling and an effort to help women in the future. NGOs could manage the homes with government monitoring and supervision.

43. As gender-based violence remains a major obstacle to the full realization of women's rights in Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Transitional Authority must promote and protect the human rights of women and exercise due diligence:

(a) To prevent, investigate and punish acts of all forms of violence against women;

(b) To apply international human rights norms and to ratify and implement fully international human rights instruments that relate to violence against women and girls;

(c) To take all measures to empower women and strengthen their economic independence and to protect and promote the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to allow women and girls to protect themselves better against violence;

(d) To condemn violence against women and not invoke custom, tradition or practices in the name of religion or culture to avoid their obligations to eliminate such violence;

(e) To intensify efforts to develop and/or utilize legislative, educational, social and other measures aimed at the prevention of violence, including the adoption and implementation of laws, the dissemination of information, active involvement with community-based players and the training of legal, judicial and health personnel, and, where possible, through developing and strengthening support services;

(f) To enact and, where necessary, reinforce or amend domestic legislation, including measures to enhance the protection of victims, to investigate, prosecute, punish and redress the wrongs done to women and girls subjected to any form of violence, whether in the home, the workplace, the community or society, in custody or in situations of armed conflict, to ensure that they conform with relevant international human rights instruments and humanitarian law, and to take action to investigate and punish persons who perpetrate acts of violence against women;

(g) To formulate, implement and promote, at all appropriate levels, plans of action to eliminate violence against women, guided by, inter alia, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, as well as relevant regional instruments pertaining to the elimination of violence against women;

(h) To support initiatives undertaken by women's organizations and non-governmental organizations on the elimination of violence against women and to establish and/or strengthen, at the national level, collaborative relationships with relevant non-governmental and community-based organizations, and with public and private sector institutions, aimed at the development and effective implementation of provisions and policies relating to violence against women, including in the area of support services for victims;

(i) To intensify efforts to raise collective and individual awareness about violence against women, to highlight men's role in the prevention and elimination of violence, and to encourage and support initiatives that encourage behavioural change on the part of perpetrators of violence against women;

(j) To develop and/or enhance, including through funding, training programmes for judicial, legal, medical, social, educational, police, correctional service, military, peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and immigration personnel, in order to prevent the abuse of power leading to violence against women and to sensitize such personnel to the nature of gender-based acts and threats of violence;

(k) To examine the impact of, and take measures to address, gender role stereotypes that contribute to the prevalence of violence against women, including in cooperation with the United Nations system, regional organizations, civil society, the media and other relevant actors.

At the international level

44. The international community must continue to provide support for the completion of the transitional process in accordance with the Bonn Agreement. Donor countries that pledged financial aid at the Tokyo Conference should fulfil their commitments promptly and, in particular, provide the support they pledged to the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The international community should provide long-term assistance, as well as current budget support, for the expenses of the Afghanistan Transitional Authority and for the social and economic reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghan society and to create sustainable change for women in Afghanistan.

45. Donors should also provide support for the programme of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission.

46. Governments that are involved in funding reconstruction programmes should make sure that these programmes take into consideration in formulating programmes the special needs and experiences of women and girls. In particular, States should develop gender-sensitive programmes, including health care and trauma counselling, to deal with the special needs of young girls and women who have been sexually abused and raped.

47. Recent events and the deteriorating security situation described in the present report, should cause Member States, including members of the United Nations Security Council, to review their commitments of resources for ensuring security throughout Afghanistan.

48. Institutions designed to begin the process of establishing accountability in Afghanistan, such as the Human Rights Commission and the Civil Service Commission should be given the support they require. The United Nations and the international community should assist these institutions to investigate and address past and present human rights abuses, including gender-based violations, and ensure that the national transitional justice consultation to address abuses of the past is supported financially, technically and politically by the United Nations and

the international community. To prevent future targeting of women leaders in Afghanistan, all cases of intimidation during the Loya Jirga should be investigated and security measures taken to ensure the safety of those who report such incidents.

49. The international community should support efforts to promote justice for human rights violations, particularly by strengthening Afghan institutions of justice that respect internationally recognized norms.

50. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) must be applied. In particular, a gender perspective must be incorporated in all peacekeeping activities in Afghanistan. The role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peace-building in Afghanistan is central to the reconstruction of the country.

51. To ensure that a rights-based and gender sensitive approach is applied in all aspects of the work of UNAMA, in order to implement all commitments to gender mainstreaming and affirmative action.

52. All documents reflecting agreements between UNAMA and the Afghan Transitional Authority should contain explicit language regarding attention to/implementation of a gender sensitive approach. In reference to the need for gender expertise in the programme secretariats, the Inter-agency Gender Network has indicated its readiness to offer technical support and backstopping.

53. There is a growing need for counselling and other forms of support for staff (national and international) to address issues related to insecurity, return and settling back in Afghanistan, amongst other issues.

Notes

[1] See the report on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/2002/43) para. 45.

[2] Based on information gathered in a girls' school in Qalat, Zabul province. See Afghanistan: Return of the Warlords, Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper, June 2002.

[3] Ibid.